

The Lay-Mans Letter to the B——p of S——y, in Answer to His Speech for Occasional Conformity.

My L——d,

Since your L——p has taken the Pains to expose your self in Print, it wou'd be Pity no body shou'd take notice of it, as well to shew your L——ps great Candour to, and Affection for, the Royal Family, as your undoubted Inclinations to the Church of England, as by Law Establish'd. Whether this Bill to prevent Occasional Conformity, or rather to prevent the growth of Sin and Hypocrisy, was intended for the Service of the Church, no True-Churchman ever doubted, and the very Dissenters themselves allow it: Notwithstanding your L——p is pleas'd to tell us, *You are convinced the Effects of such a Bill will be quite contrary.*

Surely your L——p must be very quick sighted, or the H——e of C——ns very shallow-pated to pass a-Bill for the Service of the Church, really intending it so, when your L——p at once, as it were by Intuition, saw the the Consequences would prove destructive to it. I dare say, if your L——p had not had a Prophetick Spirit, by which you was infallibly assur'd of the ill Effects that Bill wou'd produce, your L——p could not have a an Heart or a Face to speak against it, but would have promoted it with all possible Zeal.

What your L——p promised Her Majesty is not easie to determine from your Words, nor proper for me to Examine, but if I may guess, by the sequel of your L——ps most Excellent Speech, with submission I conceive it was, that you would act sincerely and according to your Conscience in the Affair of this Bill, and I doubt not but your L——p has faithfully perform'd your Promise, and truly acted according to the Principles your L——p imbibed with your Mothers Milk.

As for the *Indecent and Unjust Treatment* your L——p, and some of the same Order have *intended in many Printed Libels*, your L——p knows, better than I can e'er pretend to,

whether it is *Indecent and Unjust*. But let that be as it will, your ——ps are *Disciples of the Cross*, and, your Profession, *must go thro' Good Report and Ill Report*, and when you are reviled, you must not revile again.

We must freely own, sa your L——p, *that there have been Severities among us in every Reign since the Reformation that there are Blemishes not easily wiped off.* This, my L——d is a sufficient Authority for the Dissenters to call the Church of England a Persecuting Church ever since the Reformation, and I with the Author don't think so, since we are credibly inform'd that Great Man to his Eternal Scandal said so: And, if he really thinks, as he said, which we have no reason to doubt, he ought in conscience to renounce that Church for the future. *Persecution is utterly Inconsistent with Christianity*, and consequently a *Persecuting Church* cannot be *Christian*.

I cannot but think you L——p has been very free, with all the Signs of the Reformed Kings of England, but especially with the Queens Great Grandfathers, Grandfathers, Uncles and Fathers; not to mention what your L——p is pleas'd peremptorily to affirm of King Edward the Sixth and Q. Elizabeth, viz. *The Burnings in K. Edward's Reign are the Reproach of our Time.* And, *The Capital Proceedings in Elizabeth's Reign, and the severe Act in the 35 Year of it, that punishes Meetings with Imprisonment, Banishment and Death, are Blemishes even on that Long and Glorious Reign.* Tho' by the by, the Burnings in K: Edwards Reign were mostly, not to say altogether, against the Papists, and when your L——p fixes a Reproach upon that Reign, and upon that account, one would almost believe your L——p was turn'd High-Church-Man.

Whatever your Lp. may think, the Severities in the Reign of K. James the First, if they can be called Severities, were absolutely necessary for the Preservation both of

Church and State, and indeed so they were in the Reign of King Charles the First. But he, Good Man, resolv'd to try them by Yielding and Condescension, till by Granting them all they could desire he made them still more Unreasonable, more Ungrateful, and more and more Imposing till they had Robb'd him of every thing, and at last of his Life. Your Lp. cannot well have forgot this, if your Lp. remembers any thing of your Excellent Sermons you formerly Preached before the House of Commons on the 30th of Jan. 16 —

The Son of this blessed Martyr, as the Incomparable Author of the *New Association* styles him, King Charles the 2d by keeping a Steady tho' not Secret hand of Government over them for 12 Years, made them dwindle away even to Nothing; till in the Year 1672 he gave them a Full and Free Toleration for their Religion. That immediately they Revived, gain'd Strength, and their Numbers increased prodigiously; and they, as soon, fell into their Old Road of Forgetting all Benefits, of Calumniating and Aspersing their Benefactor, and Plotting against him (for now they had a View of getting the Power again into their Hands) till they Ran'd him up to the Wall at the Oxford Parliament, and he narrowly escaped with his Life: as he did by a Great Providence, from the Rye-House Assassination. Thus far says that Excellent Man. And these things made the King exert his Authority, and put him upon keeping the Laws in their due Channel and Vigour. Now I hope your Lp. will not rank that Monarch in the Black Catalogue of Persecutors, because he let the Laws loose upon those Persons who would have ruin'd him. The Fate of his Royal Father, and the Treatment he receiv'd from the Faction Your Lp. is now become an Advocate for, were sufficient Cautions for him to be on his Guard, and to keep them within their Proper Bounds, tho' they had never attempted to encroach upon his Prerogative, to blacken his Government, and to serve him, in as bad a manner, as they served his Father. I appeal to your Lp. whether there were not such Designs on

foot when my Ld. — d. Sh. — bury was President of the Council. Your Lp. I am confident knows the History of those Times, and for what Reason he and some others of his Gang fled to Holland. But I won't urge this Matter any farther, lest I should offend a Great Man, who for Self-Preservation ran away with him. King Charles's Reign is well known: I with the Author of this Speech was so well.

What your Lp. is pleas'd Modestly to say of the Queen's Father's Reign, I shall not give my self the Trouble to Answer, since the Transactions of that Time are within Our Memories, and Few are ignorant of them who know any thing. I shall only say this, I am of Opinion, that if King James had, instead of a Toleration, debarr'd the Dissenters of all Offices and Employments, either Civil or Military, pull'd down their Meetings, as they did the Romish Chappels (tho' I am no Profelyte to, or Advocate for, the Papacy.) He might have Establish'd His Throne, and rais'd His Royal (which no Bishop can deny) Person beyond the Reach of Their Most Invererate Malice. I hope, with submission, your Lp. has more Policy in you than to reflect upon, and abuse the Queen's Father; and if you designed it as a Reflection, I hope your Lp. will not do it again: because C — t — bury may fall, and GREAT is INTEREST.

But, to keep close to the Text, your Lp. in the next Sentence, presumes, for I must call it so, to say, *By all this we see, that the whole Management, with Relation to Dissenters, was an Artifice to advance a Popish Interest.* How that can be, I cannot imagine. Does your Lp. consider (as the foremention'd Author has it, whom I must therefore vindicate from your Lps. Unchristian Aspersions, that he is a Roman-Catholick) that *It is the Maxim of the Politicks at Rome, that the only Method for Destroying the Church England is, to encourage and set up the Dissenters; who ever HAVE, ever WILL (as oblig'd by their Principles) and CAN, with less suspicion of the Deluded People, overthrow Episcopacy, (the most substantial Enemy of the Papacy) than*

if it were, attack'd bare-fac'd by any Prince or others Professing Popery; And every Degree that the Dissenters do Rise, it is even a Mathematical Demonstration, that Episcopacy must fall in some Proportion, these being directly Opposite to each other. If, to allow the Dissenters their Full Swing by an Act of Toleration, is the most Effectual Way to destroy the Church of England, then, *vice versa*, to a-bridge them of That Toleration is the most ready Means to preserve that Church. I hope your Lp. is not against the Preservation of the Church as by Law establish'd, tho' I must confess, this whole Argument seems to favour very much of the Leven of Anti-Monarchical Principles, and to look not a little squint-Ey'd upon a second solemn League and Covenant, already concerted and agreed upon in your Lps. own Country. For I cannot but observe that your Lp. is lavish in your Commendations of K. W. above all the Now Queens Royal Progenitors; (tho' every Man must praise the Bridge he goes over) but, if he had not given Us a timely Release, we might justly have been compared as *Issachar* was, to a strong Ass couching down between two Burdens, and, I am apt to think, with more Reason; for, perhaps the Church of England as by Law establish'd, instead of Two, might have been forc'd to bear Four, if not treble the Number.

But however, after he had deliver'd us from all our Fears and Dangers, your Lp. assures us, his next Care was to secure the Church of England by the Act of Toleration. Here, my Ld. I profess, I am at a loss to know what your Lp. means by the Church of England, since your Lp. seems to have forgot by Law Establish'd. If your Lp. thinks the Church of England inclusive of all Protestants, 'tis a Notion perfectly Latitudinarian; and no stanch Church-Man can hold it. A Comparison in Religion gives the Wolves an Opportunity to creep into the Folds, and devour the Sheep, and when once they are in, 'tis an Hard Matter to get them out again. If your Lp. thinks the Church of England, as by Law Establish'd, The Church of England; it wanted not to

be secur'd by an Act of Toleration. The Laws were on its side before, which, if they were strictly put in Execution, would be far more severe than ever this Bill to prevent Occasional Conformity was design'd to be. But my Ld. to secure the Church of England by an Act of Toleration, is such an odd piece of Sense, that had not your Lp. said it, I should have taken it for Non-sense. Can a Toleration make the Church of England, by Law Establish'd secure? Has it not always weaken'd it? As has been shewn. Open your Fences, and let the Goats into your Vineyards, and then see what work they'll make. Let the Dutch open their Sluices and break down their Dikes, give the Sea an open Passage, a free Toleration to come in upon them, and you may easily suppose what will follow. To secure the Church of England, I suppose, from being able to make any Oppolition: for to Secure, signifies as well to put any one in *Salva Custodia*, to lay one in Prison, as to make one safe.

In the next Paragraph, your Lp. is pleas'd to tell us, That the Numbers of the Dissenters are abated, by a moderate Computation, at least a Fourth Part, if not a Third Part. I am sure the Numbers of Conventicles has encreas'd sufficiently within these eight years; whether the Number of Auditors do, or no, I cannot determine. But I believe the Dissenters never rais'd any Conventicles to read *Wall-Lectures* in.

Your Lp. p. 4th, affirms You know no High Church but the Church of Rome. Surely your Lp. does not mean what you speak; for, Is there not a Distinction even of Church-men? Are there not some more for the Church than others? I am sure your Lp. knows it. But besides, my Ld. the Church of England by Law Establish'd, is High Church, with Respect to the Dissenters, tho' Low Church, with Respect to the Papists. The Church of England is in the middle between both; it pretends not to the base groveling Principles of the one, nor the High flying Superstition and Idolatry of the other. An High Church-Man,

my Ld. is a Name, the best of Men are not ashamed of; and those Luke-warm Church-of-England-Men who find fault with that Distinction deserve not the Name of any Church.

But, tho' your Lp. is so Angry with the Distinction of High-Church-Man, you need not be so much Offended with the Church of England, as by Law establish'd. Your Lp. by a very unfair way of Arguing, seems to insinuate, because one Papist said he was for the Church of England, as by Law establish'd; Ergo, all who are for the Church of England, as by Law establish'd, are Papists. But your Lp. very prudently, took the liberty to ask him; How such a Profession did agree with his Sincerity? He gave your Lp. an Answer, and I wish some others, who live by the Church, could give as good an Answer why they are *Leviticalians*.

What your Lp. has said in Commendation of your self and the rest of your Brethren, might have been as well left out. Those who are Enemies to your Order, will never be persuaded of your Extravagant Goodness, and those who know you, want not to know you better from your own Mouth. Your Lps. are Lights set upon Candlesticks, not hid under a Bushel, and if any one burns blue it is easily discerned. That your Lp. always acted on a Principle of Moderation, is plain to all who know any thing. 'Twas your Lps. Moderation, your Great Moderation which made your Lp. take a Trip over Sea, or I am much mistaken.

After all, to come to the Point, viz. *The Bill to prevent Occasional Conformity*. Your Lp. at first dash seems to disapprove the Title, as accompany'd with Error and Mistake, and for this Reason because your Lp. was an Occasional Conformist in Genoa and Holland. Which is as much as to say, if your Lp. has done amiss, another may lawfully do so too. Julian might have urged the same Argument, and perhaps with as much Reason.

An Occasional Conformity with a less Perfect Church (your Lp. speaks generally) may well consist with the continuing to worship God in a more perfect one. Hath Light any fellowship with Darkness? Can a Man bow down in the House of Rimmon and be Guiltless? God is not to be Mock'd. *An Occasional Conformity with a less perfect Church*, i. e. with any Church (for I hope your Lp. will allow the Church of England to be the most perfect Church) your Lp. thinks consistent with the True Worship of God. Any Man then may without Danger Communicate with the Pres-

byterians, Anabaptists, Independents, Quakers, and even with the Whore of Babylon Her self. If those who died in Q. Mary's Reign, were rather obstinate Secticks, than Martyrs; Cromwell was an Ass, and Laud, in later Times, was a Fool to die for not conforming to the Dissenting Faction, when he might have preserved his Life—without endangering the security of his Soul.

The Religion of an Occasional Conformist, is a meer Weather-cock Religion, it turns about with every Wind, and is never fixt in any Point. I think therefore it was the highest Prudence the House of Commons could possibly shew to find out such excellent Means to put a stop to it. Suppose the Corporation Act and the Test Act do not infer that those who have once set their Hands to the Plough, should be and always continue to be, of the Communion of the Church of England, is it not necessary they should? Is it necessary that Occasional Conformity should be extirpated out of Ireland? and is it not necessary that it should be banish'd out of England? 'Tis strange some of these Great Men who advised it There, should so much oppose it Here, unless they resolv'd to use the Means to cure others, and languish themselves under the same Distemper. I cannot see what Discouragement it can be to any abroad for your Lps to pass this Bill. The States are the Persons we ought most to regard in this Juncture, and They I am perswaded cannot be offended at us; for they that will not allow that any Persons who keep to any other Communion of Religion but that Establish'd by the States, shall be capable of any Office or Public Employment in the State. 'Tis that which keeps their Government entire and secure. Now can they blame Us if we follow their Example for our own security? But perhaps this Bill will raise Discontents or Apprehensions in great Numbers in Home which may come to have very ill Effects. I see no reason our Dissenters at Home should be at all discontented at this Bill, since it is not to destroy their Toleration, but only exclude them from Public Offices. Did the Primitive Christians under the Roman Emperors complain because they were not admitted into the Senate, or entrusted with the Administration of Public Affairs? tho' their Numbers were Great, and their Abilities unquestion'd.

I hope my Ld. our Occasional Conformists are Christians, and not above following their Great Example. But that I may not tire your Lp. I shall only observe one thing; The Dissenters Ann. 1648 in the Acts of their General Assembly declar'd all Toleration to be Anti-Christian. By the History of the Times we may see how merciful they were, and what will become of Us if ever they get on Horse back again. Which to prevent ought to be the care of every Good Church-Man, and cannot better be done than by debarring them from all Public Offices and Employments.

F I N I S.